

# moms to the rescue

PTAS ARE FINDING **SCHOOL FUNDRAISING** MORE CHALLENGING THAN EVER SINCE PARENTS HAVE BEEN PINCHED BY THE UP-AND-DOWN ECONOMY. BUT THESE MOMS HAVE FOUND CREATIVE WAYS TO **BRING IN BIG BUCKS** FOR THEIR KIDS' SCHOOLS.

## playing dress-up

While the raffle, auctions, dinner and dancing at Somerset Hills Learning Institute's Halloween fundraising ball in Bedminster, New Jersey, were big hits, it was the costume contest that really brought down the house. More than 300 guests competed, and their getups ran the gamut from the rock band Kiss to the entire cast of *Gilligan's Island*, says Judi Meighan, the ball's auction chair. Such over-the-top Halloween costumes helped bring in more people (everyone wanted to see who'd be wearing what) and made the gala more fun (which put people in a giving mood). "When it was all over, we'd raised nearly \$500,000!" says Judi.

## selling fun

Bre Nolan and two other moms from Avon, Connecticut, scaled back the Pine Grove School's PTA fundraiser from a sit-down dinner plus auction at a hotel to a \$15 bring-your-own-food-and-wine meal at a community center. "Since people weren't paying much to come, they had more money to bid," says Bre. Rather than offering typical items, the auction sold "experiences" for kids, like creating their own flavor at the local ice cream parlor (followed by an ice cream party) and the chance to name a lane in town after themselves. "We made \$34,000—an all time record," says Bre.

## banking on books

When Tozer Primary School in Windsor, Colorado, held its annual fundraiser last October, the kids didn't sell candy or wrapping paper as they've done in the past. Instead, they stayed home, read books with their parents and raised \$12,000, says PTA president Kim Schutt. "A PTA mom suggested a readathon and everyone loved the idea." During Dive into Reading, which had an under-the-sea theme, kids got octopus-themed pledge cards to encourage them to find eight sponsors. "We made just as much as when they sold stuff," says Kim. "The bonus: Kids got excited about reading, and the parents were glad they didn't have to buy anything."

## parties for parents

Last November, parents eagerly bid on artwork created by their kids, students at the German-American International School in Menlo Park, California. They also bid to attend parties hosted by parents, including a Mexican fiesta and a wine tasting. "All 20 parties sold out in 45 minutes and raised \$10,000," says Indra Pachtner, who helped organize the event. Brisk bidding for the kids' art plus items donated by local businesses boosted the total to \$50,000. "It's amazing what happens when parents, teachers and kids team up to support their school." *Lisa Collier Cool*

### WHAT A GREAT IDEA!

Want to organize a group of moms to fundraise for your kids' school? Check out [volunteerspot.com](http://volunteerspot.com), an online tool that takes the hassle out of managing parent helpers. Just register for free, use the planning wizard to map out volunteer tasks, and your list of potential volunteers will receive instant email invitations. They can then sign up for your event with the click of a mouse. The site keeps track of everything for you.